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## IN MEMORIAM

By W. H. HOLMES

MATILDA COXE STEVENSON

MRS. Matilda Coxe Stevenson was born in San Augustine, Texas, and in infancy removed with her parents, Alexander H. and Maria Matilda (Coxe) Evans, to Washington, D. C. She was educated at Miss Anable's school in Philadelphia, and on April 18, 1872, married James Stevenson of the U. S. Geological Survey of the Territories. For a number of years, beginning with 1879, Mrs. Stevenson accompanied and assisted her husband on various exploring and collecting expeditions in Arizona and New Mexico, and in this way acquired so full a knowledge of the town-building tribes of the arid region and of the requirements of research among them, that in 1889 she was assigned by the Bureau of Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution to ethnological work among these people, in conjunction with Mr. Stevenson who on the separation of ethnological researches from the Geological Survey had become a member of the latter organization.

During her several prolonged visits to Zuñi Mrs. Stevenson gained the complete confidence of the people; was regarded and treated as one of themselves and commonly addressed as "mother." Her researches were largely among the women of the tribe and directed toward an understanding of the domestic life and practices—a field from which men are largely excluded, for among the Zuñi the women have exclusive control of the rites and observances which pertain to their sex. The work of Mrs. Stevenson was thus complementary to that of Mr. Stevenson, Mr. Cushing, and other students of this people, and served to round out our knowledge of tribal history in directions hitherto imperfectly understood. Her studies of child life were especially important. She divided her voluminous work in this field into two parts; first, that dealing with the practical or domestic side embracing the habits and customs,



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games, and other ordinary activities of the children; and, second, the religious instruction and observances connected with childhood. The immediate result of the researches relating to the latter topic was the completion of a paper entitled "Religious Life of the Zuñi Child" which appeared in the *Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*. This paper is introduced by a brief account of the mythology of the Zuñi, with special reference to its bearing on the life of the child. Her work is properly regarded as a distinct contribution to this important branch of ethnological research.

In 1881, Mrs. Stevenson's labors were extended to the Hopi villages and to some of the ancient ruins of Arizona and New Mexico, to the collecting of prehistoric earthenware, and to other branches of the interesting and varied material arts of the tribes.

After Mr. Stevenson's death in 1888, Mrs. Stevenson undertook the arduous task of arranging and digesting the voluminous notes of her husband relative to the tribes, and of studying the extensive collections which he had made. Naturally these data were in many respects incomplete and the illustrative material insufficient for an extended treatment of the subject. It was found advisable therefore to have her continue the field work, a task for which she was now well fitted. The work was carried forward with indefatigable energy and zeal, and new fields of research were one after another opened to her. The seasons of 1890-91 were spent with the Sia, and the results of her studies were published in the *Eleventh Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*. In this paper every phase of the life of this small but interesting tribe is discussed—their history, arts and industries, social organization, cosmogony, cult societies, music, songs, childbirth and mortuary customs, and especially the elaborate ceremonies connected with theurgic rites and the bringing of rain.

In 1891 Mrs. Stevenson resumed her investigations among the Zuñi Indians and devoted the better part of her time until 1895 to the further study of this most interesting people. Having already gained the full confidence of the Zuñi she succeeded in obtaining admission to a number of secret organizations and ceremonies usually forbidden to outsiders, and especially to women. It was

her aim to record in full detail a complete knowledge of this people, a work in which she had a rare degree of success. The task as a whole, however, is one quite beyond the possibility of accomplishment within a single lifetime. Her researches concerning the religious beliefs and activities of the Zuñi people were exceptionally thorough, and her great work, published in the *Twenty-third Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*, is a monument to her energy, ability, and perseverance. Mrs. Stevenson concludes this work in these modest words:

The writer has made several prolonged visits to Zuñi, and after many years of investigation and intimate acquaintance with the priests, theurgists, and the people generally, feels sufficiently acquainted with them, their life, and their thoughts, to venture a presentation of their esoteric beliefs, their rituals, habits, and customs. The limitations of this volume, however, make it necessary to give only a restricted account of many subjects that are deserving of more extended treatment, and much material has been reserved for future publication.

While the writer has gone deeply into the subject of the religion of the Zuñi, and is able to record the more important details of their philosophy, there are yet many fields to be worked, and an attempt at drawing final conclusions will not be made until more extensive studies of allied tribes have been undertaken. If that which is here presented serves as a basis for future investigation, and aids the Government to a better understanding of the North American Indians, the author will have succeeded in her purpose.

In January, 1904, she set out for New Mexico with the view of continuing her researches in certain directions, especially with respect to the relation of the Zuñi people in various culture fields to other tribes of the general region. Chief attention was given to the mythology and to the ceremonial observances which follow in quick succession during the late winter and the early spring months. She found the people of Zuñi much changed in recent years: the former gentleness of character and the marked courtesy of the primitive aborigines had largely disappeared, except with a few of the older men and women, the desire of sordid gain engendered by contact with the whites outweighing other consideration.

Mrs. Stevenson was commissioned in 1903 to collect material illustrative of her researches in Zuñi, to form part of the Bureau's exhibit at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, the special topic

being the religious symbolism embodied in the various arts, such as pottery, textiles, basketry, costume, and ceremonial objects generally. Her study of this subject, one heretofore much neglected, was thorough, and the significance of nearly every symbol now used by the Zuñi was obtained. She observed that, while the officers of the secret fraternities have full understanding of the symbolism associated directly with their ceremonial arts, few persons knew the meaning of the designs employed in the decoration of pottery and the other useful arts, the artists themselves having little appreciation of the poetic imagery associated with the various devices. Mrs. Stevenson expressed fear that the original significance of the decorative motives of the Zuñi people must soon be lost by them.

Aside from her systematic researches a number of special subjects were investigated, including the irrigation system of the Zuñi, the manufacture and use of native dyes, and the preparation of pigments. In January, 1905, she again entered the field, having selected the pueblo of Taos, New Mexico, as a suitable place for continuing her researches. In initiating her work in this pueblo she encountered many difficulties and her progress at first was slow; but later her study of the history, language, and customs of the tribe was facilitated and excellent results were obtained.

For a number of years Mrs. Stevenson continued her researches among the Tewa villages of the Rio Grande. Her knowledge of the tribes had now become so mature that comparative studies could be taken up to advantage, and visits were made to various pueblos for the purpose of comparing the arts and industries, mythology, ceremonies, etc., of the people. This work was continued until failing health made it advisable to return to Washington, where her varied, interesting, and most useful career came to an end June 24, 1915.

Mrs. Stevenson was one of the founders and a permanent member of the Women's Anthropological Society of Washington. Among her writings is a paper read before this Society, March 8, 1888, entitled "Zuñi Religion." It appeared in *Science*, vol. XI, no. 268, March 23, 1888. The closing paragraph of this address

is of much interest to the student of primitive beliefs and practices.

The brief account which has been given of the medicine orders of the Zuñi is perhaps sufficient to convey an understanding of this interesting phase of the pueblo life of North America. The dignitary who is usually called the "medicine-man" among our Indian tribes, is something more than the term implies in civilization. The medicine-man is both priest and doctor, and, by reason of his priestly office, he sometimes becomes a judge. The mythical beings with whom he holds converse are the gods of his people. They are the persons who bring evils, or preserve from evils: they bring health or disease, they bring peace or war, and they bring plenty or want at harvest time. Thus in all respects the gods are supposed to hold within their power all prosperity and all adversity. So the priests stand between the people and these gods, and by means of ceremonies, incantations, and many prescribed observances, the gods are induced to preserve from evil and bring happiness. The medicine practices of the Zuñi are therefore religious observances and rites; and the daily life of the Zuñi, under the guidance of their priests through the agency of the medicine order, is so controlled that every act of life assumes something of a religious character. To them their religion is fraught with much fear; to them it brings many trials, many privations, and much suffering. Notwithstanding this, they derive from it much amusement and great joy, and in it all their hopes and aspirations are centered.

Owing to the intimate relations which Mrs. Stevenson had acquired with the Pueblo tribes, she was able to penetrate deeply into customs held most sacred by the tribal authorities, and the following lines, quoted from *Smithsonian Collections*, vol. 63, disclose the startling fact that human sacrifice has been practiced even in recent years among some of the Pueblos.

Zoöic worship has to do with the healing of the sick, the beast gods acting as mediators between man and the anthropic gods. The most shocking ceremony associated with the zoöic worship of the Tewa is the propitiation of the rattlesnake with human sacrifice to prevent further destruction from the venomous bites of the reptile. The greatest secrecy is observed and the ceremonies are performed without the knowledge of the people except those directly associated with the rite which is performed quadrennially. Although many legends of the various pueblos have pointed indirectly to human sacrifice in the past, it was a revelation to Mrs. Stevenson when she found that this rite was observed by the Tewa at the present time; and, while it is known to exist only in two of the villages, she has every reason to believe that they are not exceptions. In one village the subject is the youngest female infant. In the other village an adult woman is sacrificed, a woman without husband or children being selected whenever possible. The sacrificial ceremonies occur in the kiva. The subjects are drugged with *Datura meteloides* until life is supposed to be extinct. At the proper time the

body is placed upon a sand painting on the floor before the table altar and the ceremony proceeds amid incantations and the most weird performances.

Additional details are too gruesome to be related in this place. The informant, however, took great risk in divulging a secret so strictly kept and dangerous to the tribal authorities even to one so intimate with the inner life of the tribe as was the subject of this memoir.

Mrs. Stevenson was able, self-reliant, and fearless, generous, helpful, and self-sacrificing, and the writer of these lines is deeply indebted to her and to Mr. Stevenson for heroic service in his behalf in a time of great need. While exploring in the Jemez mountains he was prostrated by spinal weakness due to reckless mountain climbing, being unable either to ride or walk. During two days required to summon a physician from a distant point the invalid was under Mrs. Stevenson's efficient care. Meantime, the inventive genius of the party undertook to solve the problem of his transportation to a place of safety. Under the supervision of Mr. Stevenson two long slender saplings were cut, placed side by side about two feet apart, and across the middle a litter was built on which the invalid was placed. A docile mule was harnessed between the heavy ends of the poles, travois fashion, the slender ends resting on the ground and serving as runners. In this manner, guarded by the Stevensons and followed by the entire expedition, which included Major Powell, Secretary Langley, and others, the unique procession descended over the rough mountain trails to the first settlement, whence after several days of recuperation in the home of Dr. and Mrs. Voorhees of Jemez village, the writer was able to reach the railroad and return to the East.

#### JAMES STEVENSON

The opening up of the great West was a task of no mean magnitude and enlisted the energies of a multitude of venturesome and fearless men and women. The hunter, the miner, and the homesteader were ever to the fore, penetrating the wilds and blazing the trails for the hosts which were to follow. One vast region, the Rocky Mountains, succumbed to these encroachments with much



delay, however, and the work of the pioneers was supplemented by that of the scientific explorer and more especially by the great surveys of the national government. Early in the field among these organizations was the Hayden Survey of the Territories, and associated intimately with the leader of this great enterprise and his ever staunch helper and fellow worker was James Stevenson, who may appropriately receive commendatory mention in this place. Members of the Survey had the privilege of spending the winter months in Washington preparing maps and reports on the previous season's work, and in 1872 Mr. Stevenson met and married Miss Evans, who, as already related, became his associate in the work of exploration.

James Stevenson was born in Maysville, Kentucky, December 24, 1840, and died in New York City July 20, 1888. When the Civil War broke out he joined the Northern army and served to the close of hostilities. He then engaged in explorations in the Northwest in connection with the engineering corps of the government, and afterwards with the United States Geological Survey of the Territories under Dr. F. V. Hayden, of which he became the executive officer. With Doctor Hayden he followed the Missouri, Columbia, and Snake rivers to their sources, and was an ever faithful and efficient aid in the conduct of the expeditions. He took an active part in the survey of the Yellowstone region and was instrumental in having the heart of this "wonderland" made a national park. He was continued as executive officer of the Survey when it passed under the directorship of Maj. John W. Powell, but was soon detailed for research in connection with the Bureau of Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution, exploring the ancient ruins of Arizona and New Mexico, investigating the habits and customs of the Navajo, Zuñi, Hopi, and other tribes, and making extensive collections of interesting art materials of the regions, ancient and modern.

U. S. NATIONAL MUSEUM,  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

THE LIST OF MRS. STEVENSON'S SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS IS AS FOLLOWS:

1. Zuñi and the Zuñians. Privately published, Washington, April 18, 1881, pp. 1-30.

2. The Religious Life of the Zuñi Child. Fifth Annual Report Bureau of Ethnology, 1883-84 (Washington, 1887), pp. 533-555, 4 plates.
3. Zuñi Religion. Science, vol. xi, no. 268, New York, March 23, 1888.
4. Tusayan Legends of the Snake and Flute People. Proceedings American Association Advancement of Science, vol. xli, 1893, pp. 258-270.
5. The Sia. Eleventh Annual Report Bureau of Ethnology, 1889-90 (Washington, 1894), pp. 3-157.
6. A Chapter in Zuñi Mythology. Memoirs of the International Congress of Anthropology, Chicago, 1894, pp. 312-319.
7. Zuñi Ancestral Gods and Masks. American Anthropologist, vol. ii, Feb., 1898, pp. 33-40.
8. Zuñi Games. American Anthropologist (N. S.), vol. 5, no. 3, July-Sept., 1903, pp. 468-497.
9. The Zuñi Indians: Their Mythology, Esoteric Fraternities, and Ceremonies. Twenty-third Annual Report Bureau American Ethnology, 1908-09 (Washington, 1904), pp. 1-608, pls. 1-129, figs. 1-34.
10. Ethnobotany of the Zuñi Indians. Thirtieth Annual Report Bureau American Ethnology, 1908-09 (Washington, 1915), pp. 31-102.
11. The Sun and Ice People among the Tewa Indians of New Mexico. (Abstract.) Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, vol. 65, no. 6, pp. 73-78, 1914-1915.
12. Strange Rites of the Tewa Indians. (Abstract.) Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, vol. 63, no. 8, pp. 73-80.